

Telecommunications: open network provision (ONP) to voice telephony, and universal service

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With less than four months to go until the opening up of the telecommunications market to competition, the European Institutions are putting the finishing touches to the necessary legislative framework. The Committee adopted a recommendation for second reading by Mrs Mel READ (PES, UK) approving one of the last pieces of the "1998 package" - the Council Common Position on the revised ONP voice telephony (Open Network Provision) directive. As the Council had failed to incorporate most of Parliament's amendments from the first reading, the rapporteur has retabled most of those supported by the Commission. Along with these amendments, the Committee also approved several amendments introduced by Mrs Read aiming at removing changes made by the Council, which in effect weaken the Commission's proposal in key areas such as users' and consumers' rights. Other amendments aim at strengthening the rights of disabled users, ensuring that the concept of affordability of the universal service is defined at European, and not, at national level.